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on the regular high school work. They are taught in separate classes, however, since their age and previous training make a somewhat different method of procedure desirable. They have a better developed "Sprachgefühl" and their mastery of the language is such that they enter more into the spirit of the books read, see the finer points of the style, and get more enjoyment out of the work than do the pupils who begin the study of the language at a later age.

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## THE PHONOGRAPH IN MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING

The use of the talking machine in teaching foreign languages is by no means new. Many experiments have been made with it in schools and colleges, and the silent verdict brought in by its general abandonment is that it is not worth the trouble it involves. In view of the impetus given by the war to practical methods of instruction this aid acquires a new interest and may properly be discussed once more. The writer began more than a dozen years ago to employ in the class room cylinder records, and has since substituted discs, finding their use very valuable in some applications to French, and of no advantage in certain others. Hence he ventures to think he can speak with experience and impartiality of the appliances as related to general language instruction.

Everyone knows the immense improvement which the past few years have brought to all makes of talking machines, particularly in distinctness of articulation. At the same time there is an invincible unnaturalness in the reproduction of speech, due in part to the mechanism and in part to human inability to speak effectively into a receiver without falsifying one's normal pronunciation. In choosing records it is necessary to condone, of course, the defects inherent in all speech mechanically rendered, that is, a metallic and nasal character. After a little familiarity

with "disc talk" we lose sight of its peculiarities, and easily fix our attention upon such of its features as we wish to study. We must insist, however, upon having records made by cultivated natives of the country whose language is under investigation. This is not as difficult a matter as it was some years ago, when many records in French, Spanish and Italian were made by well-meaning Americans or self-satisfied Germans. Without advertising anyone we may say that the best known firms now publish excellent records by native speakers, and that several series of lessons, or "systems," can be obtained from establishments whose offers are to be read in the daily press. Probably it is these lessons or "systems" that the teacher will find the surest and most idiomatic. Musical records and recitations are likely to be unsatisfactory because of the distortion of pronunciation necessary for musical or dramatic effect, even when the singer or reciter is truly of the nationality to which he lays claim. If the purchaser can get the opinion of some native or well-grounded American teacher as to the correctness of the records for sale, he will, of course, be safer than if he depends upon his own judgment.

Having become the possessor of a good machine and a suitable set of records in the language to be learned or taught, what can we hope to accomplish? It is evident that we have at our disposal now many of the advantages to be obtained from having a native teacher, including that authoritative quality, both in the form of what is said and the way of pronouncing it, which the best trained American inevitably lacks. We may learn or teach a language aurally, and can depend upon our teacher never to vary and never to tire. We can make him repeat hundreds of times an expression or a sound, without losing patience or making an iota of change, something we could exact of no living instructor. The superiority over a human teaching machine is manifest; but on the other hand, the phonograph will not furnish enthusiasm or energy. It teaches only when its master makes it teach, and hence its failure in so large a number of cases of beginners who hope everything from its use, but who are quite as incapable of learning from speech records as from grammars or course-books. An acquaintance of mine complained that he learned nothing from a set of excellent records in Italian, though he used to set one going in his dining room every day, while he was at lunch. Of course harder and more systematic application would be needed to

produce an effect, and as a rule an experienced teacher should direct the use of the talking machine. After years of giving advice to persons seeking to teach themselves foreign tongues by means of speech records, the writer has reached the conclusion that self-instruction of this sort is unsatisfactory. The need of some one who already knows the idiom is always felt. The most enthusiastic learner is likely to want to ask for explanation and information, and after the novelty of the phonograph has worn off he sits in front of it much as he would sit in the company of foreigners who talked nothing but their own mother tongue.

For one who has previously made some progress, or for the teacher of a modern language who desires to improve his own use of it, or to keep up his fluency, the case is quite different; and probably the value of this means of practising orally and aurally is greatest in preserving what has been acquired abroad with much effort and perseverance. Many teachers know this simple secret, and keep ears and tongue up to concert pitch, so to speak, by daily interviews with some reliable reproductions of the language of their acquirement. There can be no qualification in urging those who cannot go frequently abroad, to adopt this way of traveling for their linguistic benefit.

When it is a question of making the language disc teach others, there must be no misunderstanding as to its capabilities. Can it really impart the language, that is, vocabulary and syntax, and how is it to be employed? Certainly we find it a valuable adjunct to the usual means adopted, but only as an adjunct. The cause of much of the disappointment felt after using language records in class has been the too great dependence upon them. After all, the longest conceivable series of records, forming a system, cannot present all the syntax of a language, cannot exemplify a large vocabulary, and most clearly, cannot offer the variety and animation which a competent instructor must manage to furnish. Experience has shown the writer, at least that the function of the speech record is to supplement the lesson in the grammar or the course-book, or the teacher's efforts in such use of the direct or semi-direct method as he may adopt. There is no doubt that the sound of foreign phrases, coming from a machine and bringing the character of a strange voice, strikes the attention of the learner and arouses an interest. This stimulates memory, as the same phrases repeated by himself or heard

from the teacher can never do. The most telling way of employing the records, then, is causing them to be memorized by the pupil. No matter what the general subject of the lesson may be a certain amount of time can be given to running off a record. This should be done slowly the first time, the pupils' eyes being all the while on the printed text of what is heard. The teacher should then make the machine repeat all or certain portions of the record, commenting on this or that point as he deems wise. Every teacher will have his personal method of doing this, and will have a conviction as to how much comment is profitable. Then, when the subject matter is completely understood, the record should be given with all books closed. Lastly there should be the demand that the text of the record or some part of it be memorized and recited at the next exercise, the pronunciation and general enunciation of the sentences to be as closely imitated as possible. In most cases the rather perfunctory conversations of the series or "systems" are best for the purpose outlined, the classic extracts rendered in the higher or supplementary series which are now obtainable, being of dubious value to any but teachers and unusually advanced students. It is interesting to hear real literature, prose or poetry, uttered by dramatic artists who are masters in their respective languages; but such recitals afford almost nothing that can be retained for use in either the matter or the manner of daily speech.

Just here appears the difficulty which has prevented most schools and classes from taking advantage of talking machines in language instruction. In the Military and the Naval Academy, in which conditions can be controlled, for many years foreign language lessons were prepared by the use of records. It was possible to provide the necessary machines and records, to keep them in suitable rooms where they could be operated, and to assign hours to very small squads of pupils for their employment. It was claimed that, for the kind of instruction then given to the cadets, the gain in time and in thoroughness obtained by means of the method was very marked. In almost no other institution, however, can satisfactory arrangements for preparation of lessons from speech records be made. Common sense precludes our asking each student to incur the expense of providing himself with a set of records, and usual as it is for a family to possess some form of mechanism for getting sound from discs, it cannot

be assumed that such possession is universal. Nor can all students have access for purposes of study to machines kept in a central place by the school or an instructor. The ideal use of the language record in teaching has, therefore, never been attainable, and the operation of a single machine in class room during the regular exercises has proved to be of infinitesimal influence. All that can be said is that where anything like true preparation of a lesson by means of a speech record can be demanded of the pupil, a very appreciable increase in thoroughness, naturalness of utterance, speed of attainment and interest in the study may be looked for; although no series of records is extensive enough to afford more than a sample of a foreign language. Where perfect conditions cannot be closely approximated, the use of the talking machine for teaching language had better be considered out of the question for class work. If certain pupils can be persuaded to make use of foreign language records at home, so much the better for the individuals concerned. Their progress will almost invariably justify the belief that there is great value in the assistance afforded by appliances which train the ear rather than the eye.

It is my opinion after long experimentation that the true success of the speech record is in teaching pronunciation and that nothing else should be asked of it. A series consisting of twenty or twenty-five discs can be so managed as to provide, in the class room itself, a special drill in the sounds of a language, and to enable the teacher who has some notion of phonetics to analyze them for intelligent pupils, while at the same time it gives a sufficient model to such as are apt in imitation. It may be true, as often asserted, that the imitative power of the child's mind ceases to be an important factor long before the age of twelve, and that in teaching language to all but the youngest children we cannot count upon it. Still there are individuals of all ages in whom imitation is very active, and in most of us the faculty can be cultivated with profit. It goes without saying that for natural imitators the speech record does wonders, but used in analytical fashion it also accomplishes a great deal for pupils who need to be drilled into something like the correct pronunciation of a strange tongue. Formerly, while cylinders were our only resource it was necessary to listen to a record by means of tubes and ear-pieces, and the number of pupils listening at one time was very small, owing to the small number of appliances which could be effectively used. My own use of

the cylinders in teaching accurate pronunciation was limited to advanced, graduate students because they were never more numerous than half a dozen in a class, whereas undergraduate classes were always upwards of twenty. At present the disc record is in general so much more distinct than was the cylinder that tubes and ear-pieces are not required. A disc can be clearly heard, even in the minutest details, by a large group of students, provided the room has no echo and provided the instructor is skillful in adapting the needle to the purpose, that is, in giving distinctness rather than volume of sound.

The method exemplifying the foreign speech sounds will hardly be the same for all teachers, and should not be the same for all classes. The writer's way of dealing with students of college age, who may be presumed to learn almost entirely by analysis, is to furnish to each one a copy, typewritten if necessary, of the text of the record to be considered, the copy having been previously annotated, with a view to calling attention to the peculiarity of some one foreign sound. For instance, the vowel at the head of our alphabet presents to speakers of English special difficulties in German, French, and Italian. By underscoring all *a*'s, or writing above each the proper symbol of some known phonetic system, the teacher issues notice, so to speak, of what is to come, and then stands aside while the voice of some native exemplifies. Generally one rendering of the record is not enough, and many repetitions may be desirable. Then pupils can be called upon to read aloud the annotated text, reproducing with especial accuracy the sound in question. If memorizing of the record for a subsequent exercise is feasible, so much the better. When the sound studied is properly produced by the average pupil, another vowel can be exemplified by a disc or discs affording clear and numerous instances of it. The method implies, of course, ability on the teacher's part to distinguish shades of pronunciation and to describe the mechanical process necessary to produce each fundamental sound of the language taught. The vowels are more accurately understood in this manner than if the instructor's explanation and example were not supplemented; and a great deal of help can be given to the learner by treating the consonants in the same way. Thanks to the clearness of utterance now obtained from the disc machine, the peculiarities of foreign consonants can be pointed out and apprehended with enough success

to compensate for the trouble of operating the machine. When all the cardinal points of pronunciation are firmly fixed the records will be valuable as examples of general enunciation, although it must not be expected that they will work a miracle which years of residence in a foreign country often fails to work for English speaking people.

Enough has been said to prove that the writer believes the phonograph to afford aid in teaching. He thinks that no teacher of language should let this expedient go without investigating at least. Very probably some teachers will find the handling of a mechanism troublesome; some will decide that attention is distracted by the presence of a phonograph in class. Others may decide that it takes too much time or that its use raises too many points requiring discussion. Certainly, to get results from it an instructor must be well grounded in the phonetics of the language taught, and should have had practice enough with the phonograph to enable him to manage it easily and with confidence before his pupils. To this end he will do well to make diligent use of the appliance himself and to attempt nothing for others with it until he is convinced as to what it can reasonably be counted upon to accomplish. The writer invariably recommends the phonograph to students having enthusiasm, intelligence and enterprise, but does not introduce it into the class room except for pronunciation, and then not in the earliest stages of instruction.

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